LAAC Member Applications Received April/May 2018

1. Arina Goldring
2. Natasha Barriga
3. Carrie Wagner
4. Richard Thomas
5. Johnathan Williams

Arina Goldring

1. Why are you interested in joining the LA Advocacy Council?

I am interested in applying to serve on LAAC because I support LAAC's mission and vision. I strongly believe that students deserve to access high quality public education and parental choices must be respected and protected. I am committed to the charter movement.

2. How have you been engaged in successful advocacy in the past?

I currently serve on the LAUSD Oversight and Authorization Working Group and DRL Working Group. I signed collective letters, attended Advocacy Day in Sacramento and assisted Parent Organizers with parent engagement efforts. I participated in the multiple fundraisers organized for Nick Melvoin, Kelly Gonez and Monica Garcia.

3. In your opinion, what are the most pressing issues facing LAUSD charter schools over the next 2 years that require an intense focus on advocacy?

I believe that the most pressing issues facing LAUSD charter schools continue to be authorization, oversight and Prop 39. As a charter community, we made progress but there is still a lot work ahead of us.

Natasha Barriga

1. Why are you interested in joining the LA Advocacy Council?

As we move into year four, my role will be expanding outside the school walls and I am looking to take a more active role in advocacy efforts. Resolute has been the beneficiary of policy changes pushed and supported by the LAAC. These policy efforts have directly impacted the work that we are able to do at our school site and I am interested in being part of a committee that works to ensure all scholars have access to high-quality public schools.

2. How have you been engaged in successful advocacy in the past?

Since opening in 2015, the vast majority of my time has been spent working at the school site, developing our program and building a leadership bench. Because my time has been spent primarily at the school site, my engagement in off-site, dedicated advocacy has been limited. This year, with the addition of two members of my leadership team, I have been able to participate more purposefully in engagement activities through CCSA such as Phone Banking, Advocacy Day for AB2635 and signing on to Collective Letters of Support.

3. In your opinion, what are the most pressing issues facing LAUSD charter schools over the next 2 years that require an intense focus on advocacy?

In my opinion, the two most pressing issues facing charter schools within LAUSD are long-term facilities and the extent to which student achievement is undervalued in the authorization and re-authorization process. As a small school, having to re-apply each year under Proposition 39 is tedious and stressful for the organization. It puts unnecessary stress on the charter school and on the site where the charter school is collocated. With more long-term facility leases available, both district and charter schools would be able to plan more appropriately for student increases and shared space. Authorizers are concerned with student achievement data as part of the Oversight Process; however, the way in which they analyze that data undervalues the growth that students make over the course of their term in the charter school.

Carrie Wagner

1. Why are you interested in joining the LA Advocacy Council ('LAAC')?

I have been working in the charter school movement since 2003 and have seen fist hand the charter school growth in Los Angeles. I have seen so many inspiring leaders create true transformation in education and I have seen some fail due to financial reasons, governance or poor academic performance. I have seen the politics of the board flip flop from supportive to not and then back again.

I believe in collaboration and trying to see all sides to an issue. I truly believe that we all do better when we work together. That is the main reason that I want to join the LAAC.

2. How have you been engaged in successful advocacy in the past?

GALS has only been open for 1 and ½ years. In that time, we have actively participated in CCSA Families visits with Elected Officials, attended the Democratic Convention and participated in the CCSA April month of advocacy in Sacramento. GALS was also an active member of the recent LAUSD working group responsible for identifying Applicable District Policies to Charter Schools.

3. In your opinion, what are the most pressing issues facing LAUSD charter schools over the next 2 years that require an intense focus on advocacy?

The most pressing issue facing LAUSD charters schools right now is the Governor's race. There are several other issues that are also on the forefront including the selection of the new Superintendent and building a strong relationship with him or her, and ensuring that we maintain at least 4 charter friendly board members on the LAUSD School Board.

Richard Thomas

1. Why are you interested in joining the LA Advocacy Council?

Based on my experience from working for Pali High, Alliance, Los Angeles Leadership Academy and New Horizons Charter Academy, I have worked closely within both High School and SPAN School systems alongside LAUSD to understand and navigate the intricate needs of the charter community over the past 9 years. I believe my extensive experience with Charter CMO's and single site charter schools, have allowed me an invaluable understanding of charter community and related district challenges facing a movement of choice. I have been a proponent of the charter policies and political challenges that are instrumental in forging change for our students in Los Angeles. My previous work experience as a Chief Financial Officer and CPA, can provide valuable financial oversight regarding district and charter advocacy issues. I have opened an innovative Blended Learning High School for Alliance and brought this instructional model to TK-8 – New Horizons Charter Academy with exceptional academic success. I would bring a technology advocacy to the council. I have been involved in working for Conversion Charter (Pali High) Union UTLA Teachers, Public School Choice (Sotomayor Learning Academies) and New Horizons Charter Academy, all on co-location or district facilities. I am interested in joining the council to assist with the variety of Advocacy efforts faced daily by Charter leaders.

2. How have you been engaged in successful advocacy in the past?

I have been involved in several Policy Working Groups with the CCSA framework to support important advocacy efforts. I joined the Dr. Rodriguez Board Resolution Prop 39 Facility Working Group to collaborate on the many challenges facing co-location sites. I have been a part of CCSA Facility Working group to collaborate with other Charter Leaders around relevant co-location issues. I have joined the Authorizing and Oversight Policy Working Group to champion the cause with how we can improve the Oversight and Charter Renewal process for charter schools. New Horizons Charter Academy has signed various letters of support brought by CCSA regarding legislation or district policies that were not favorable to the charter community as a whole. I have walked the neighborhoods and joined several phone banking efforts to engage the community to advocate for change in leadership at the District Board level by supporting civic engagement efforts to elect Dr. Rodriguez, Kelly Gonez and Nick Melvoin. New Horizons Charter Academy or myself, has been involved in many successful advocacy efforts to ensure students and parents have the best opportunity for success.

3. In your opinion, what are the most pressing issues facing LAUSD charter schools over the next 2 years that require an intense focus on advocacy?

The most pressing issue at the moment is the successful push to get Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa elected to the Governor position. This Governor's election has many critical anti-charter legislation and rhetoric from opposing candidate, Gary Newsom on the rise. The collective effort to combat these views will impact all public schools, including charters schools in California, not just LAUSD.

Within the LAUSD landscape, the issues facing many charter schools here in LA is how the Oversight Process is conducted and measured, Authorizing - Charter Renewal consistency and constant pressing of DRL that does not serve our charter schools. School facilities (Prop 39 and Funding) continues to be a major concern by many charters throughout Los Angeles. Forging a positive and productive relationship

with new LAUSD Superintendent. Many of these primary areas of concern continue to be areas of significant impact to our LAUSD charter school community.

Johnathan Williams

1. Why are you interested in joining the LA Advocacy Council?

I'm interested in joining the LAAC because with charter movement is at a critical crossroad politically, and I think my experiences with elected officials and activity in the charter market have provided me with skills necessary to have a positive impact.

2. How have you been engaged in successful advocacy in the past?

Since 1994, I have served as a spokesperson for and representative of charter schools. TAS opened in September of that year, and enjoyed early and limited political support. As we've grown, the political winds have shifted, and we find ourselves justifying and defending alignment with the right, rather than our roots with the moderate Clinton Administration and former California Senator Gary Hart.

3. In your opinion, what are the most pressing issues facing LAUSD charter schools over the next 2 years that require an intense focus on advocacy?

The most pressing issue facing LAUSD charters are political headwinds, premised on the false claim that charters take away from the "District" rather than add value to families and the community. With a zero sum mentality, those who defend the status quo attack along the "you taking money (students) from the District…and rendering the system insolvent…." We must connect better with and help empower families to take up the cause and voice their support and get friends to vote.